



The Lincoln Bridge



Each day, hundreds of visitors pass through the park on highway 177; unnoticed by most of them, and hidden in the trees lining the banks of Travertine Creek is the Lincoln Bridge. Constructed in 1909, this stone bridge connects the Flower Park area and the city of Sulphur to the mineral springs south of Travertine Creek. The bridge is the first and oldest developed structure built in the park. For over one hundred years the Lincoln Bridge has been a park landmark and a treasured part of the landscape, bridging not only the creek, but the park’s past, present, and future.

Turning a town into a park

From 1906 until 1976, the present-day Platt Historic District was known as Platt National Park. Established as the Sulphur Springs Reservation in 1902 to protect mineral springs and water resources, the park evolved from a settlement and town site into a national park. Prior to the establishment of the park, the community of Sulphur was located around the mineral springs; following the park’s creation the town was forced to relocate to the north. This development required almost equal amounts of obliteration and construction of buildings, roads, and other features.

The new town was connected to the springs in the new park by rickety wooden bridges and muddy fords. As additional visitors flocked to the mineral springs of Platt National Park, it soon became clear that a new way was needed to move people across Rock Creek and Travertine Creek to the site of Pavilion Springs. In the fall of 1908 Park Superintendent Albert Greene received permission from the Secretary of the Interior to solicit bids for a new foot bridge across Travertine Creek.

It Will “Doubtless Stand for Ages”

Superintendent Greene awarded the task of constructing the bridge in the end of November 1908 to the firm of Liberenz & Robinson. Work began immediately on the rock arch Gothic Revival structure and was nearly complete by the end of January 1909. Construction of the bridge was finished on February 11, 1909 and formally dedicated the next day. The Lincoln Bridge was the first permanent improvement in the park.

Predicting that the bridge, “will doubtless stand for ages,” Superintendent Greene eloquently described the newly completed bridge in his monthly report to the Secretary of the Interior:

As this is the first permanent improvement in the park, I may be permitted to refer briefly to its most prominent and picturesque features.

The arch, capable of sustaining any weight, spanning the stream; the four turrets at the corners, with battlement summits, surmounted with metal flag-staffs; the eight electric lights along the parapets; the rugged construction of the stone work, without mark of hammer or stroke of trowel to embellish; the paved roadway leading on the one hand to a great highway congested with travel, and on the other by sodded slopes to shady retreats along the noisy brook, unite to form, in symmetrical proportions, a feature of utility and beauty that shall be an object lesson of the stability and dignity of the general government, forever stimulating patriotism and a pride of country. It is not a thing apart - it is as if it had grown there and been made when the rugged banks of the stream and the trees were made.



Postcard image of the Lincoln Bridge, shortly after completion, 1909.

## Dedicating a Park Landmark



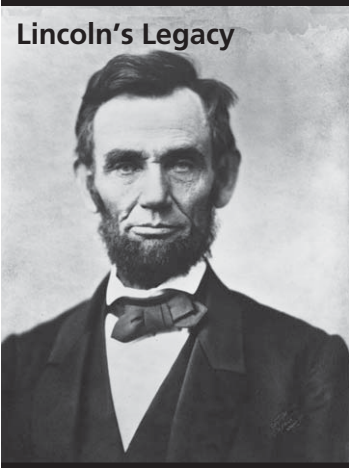
Postcard image of the Lincoln Bridge, circa 1920.

The dedication of the Lincoln Bridge took place on February 12, 1909, the centennial of the birth of President Abraham Lincoln. The ceremony was conducted with much fanfare. In a report to the Secretary of the Interior, Superintendent Greene reported:

On February 12, 1909, the opening of the bridge was celebrated by a concourse of the citizens of Sulphur and visitors to the Park. The exercises consisted of the singing of patriotic airs, reading of Lincoln’s Gettysburg oration...addresses by Mayor Kendall for the Confederate veterans;

Rev. Clark on the life and times of Lincoln; and the Superintendent on personal reminiscences of Lincoln as a neighbor and friend...Mrs. Lucy M. Bennett wearing a dress of materials bought of Lincoln when a storekeeper in Salem, and patterned after the style of that period, climbed to the top of a turret and broke a wine bottle of medicinal water from the wall, christening the structure, “THE LINCOLN BRIDGE”.

The bridge rapidly became a favorite scenic spot within the park, confirmed by the multiple postcard views taken of it in the early Twentieth century.



Lincoln’s Legacy

In 1909, Sulphur, Oklahoma, and the new park honored President Abraham Lincoln’s contributions to our nation by naming the new bridge the “Lincoln Bridge.”

Sulphur was not unique. Communities across the country remembered Lincoln’s contributions in 1909 and in the years since. Lincoln’s legacy can be found almost anywhere. He is remembered in music, poetry, sculpture. We see his face every day on coins and currency. Towns, roads, and schools bear his name.

Today, Abraham Lincoln symbolizes freedom and equality for Americans. President Lincoln fought to unite our nation during the Civil War and is honored for the ultimate sacrifice he gave to our nation, his life. We celebrate the Emancipation Proclamation, a document that ensured that all Americans were free. We recite the Gettysburg Address, perhaps the most famous oration ever given. His works are set in stone in American memory.

## The Survivor

A generation after the establishment of the park, the Great Depression brought great change. A Civilian Conservation Corps camp was located in the park, and two hundred young men worked from 1933 through 1940 on all manner of improvements: roads, trails, restrooms, and campgrounds. These work projects entirely rebuilt Platt National Park from boundary to boundary. Many of the older spring pavilions and structures were demolished to make way for new improvements at that time. Rustic buildings, swimming holes, and picnic areas, remain today as a testament to their work.

Given that the Lincoln Bridge is situated only a short distance away from the Travertine Creek highway bridge built during the 1930s, it seems remarkable that the Lincoln Bridge survived through the redesign of the park. Not only did the bridge last, but it was incorporated into the entirely new landscape design of the adjacent Flower Park area.

## A Bridge to the Future

Over one hundred years after its construction, the Lincoln Bridge has fulfilled the dream of its builders, standing solidly and silently, still connecting the town to the mineral springs whose presence led to the creation of the park.

In February of 2009, park staff and members of the community gathered to mark the centennial of the bridge and the bicentennial of its namesake. Like a century before, school children read the Gettysburg Address, and a replacement dedication plaque was placed on the southeast turret.

On summer holidays, the park flies 46-star American Flags over the bridge as homage to the early years of the park and Oklahoma’s distinction as the forty-sixth state.

Unnoticed by some, beloved by others, the Lincoln Bridge has met and exceeded Superintendent Greene’s prediction that the bridge would “doubtless stand for the ages.”

